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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a theoretical overview of education as an institution and as a field of socialization. It analyzes the relationships among multicultural education, integration, and civic society. Some of the socializers of the educational field are the formal curriculum, educational media, and the hidden curriculum. These socializers are highlighted and illustrated with empirical data regarding Estonian education phenomena. The paper explores more concrete cases: problems and perspectives of Russian schools, ethno-political discourse in school textbooks, and Russian children in Estonian schools. It notes that, although a number of studies monitoring the process of socialization in Estonian and Russian schools are still pending, two broad generalizations can be made: (1) Russian schools in Estonia have been successful in their progress towards becoming educational institutions that foster multiple identities and future citizens' loyalty to the state; and (2) Estonian schools serve as multicultural educational institutions by accommodating intercultural socialization of Russian-speaking children. (BT)

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12. Schools in Estonia as Institutional Actors and as a Field of Socialisation

Veronika Kalmus, Marje Pavelson

Introduction

An educational system is both a state institution and a partly self-regulatory agent or field of socialisation. On the one hand, an educational system is one of the most easily and swiftly controllable institutions that should help to implement state policy and disseminate the appropriate ideology. On the other hand, a school system as a community of individuals appears to be rather inert. In their day-to-day activities, educational actors are guided by socially shared assumptions and their own subjective predispositions. These different mental forces may or may not run in the same direction.

An educational system is a broad set of institutions – kindergartens, comprehensive schools, vocational schools and universities, and a network of advanced training courses for adults. Though all these institutions are crucial for successful national integration, we will focus on comprehensive schools in Estonia: those with Estonian as well as those with Russian as the main language of instruction (further referred to as Estonian and Russian schools, respectively).

Schools in Estonia face the reality of being situated in a post-Communist multiethnic society. Under conditions of a decreased birth rate and growing competition between educational institutions, the leaders of Estonian schools are becoming more and more interested in the admission of Russian-speaking children to Estonian schools. As a result, Estonian schools have the potential to grow into multicultural social environments or fields of socialisation.

The number of Russian schools diminished from 117 to 104 between 1994 and 2000. The number of bilingual schools, earlier widespread in small towns, has dropped by almost 50%. As a result, the number of pupils in Russian schools has decreased (see Figure 12.1): at the beginning of the 1990s, 37% of school-age children studied in Russian comprehensive schools; in 2000 this figure was 27%. The share of children entering the first form in Russian schools has diminished even more sharply: at the beginning of the 1990s, 41% of children (about 9,000 children) started their education in Russian schools; in 2000 this number was two-thirds lower (3,000 children). Nevertheless, Russian schools play a crucial role in educating loyal citizens-to-be of Estonia and socialising Russian-speaking children for a rich life in Estonian society. The National Curriculum of Elementary and Secondary Education has been applied for four years in Russian schools, and Estonian is now taught in every school.

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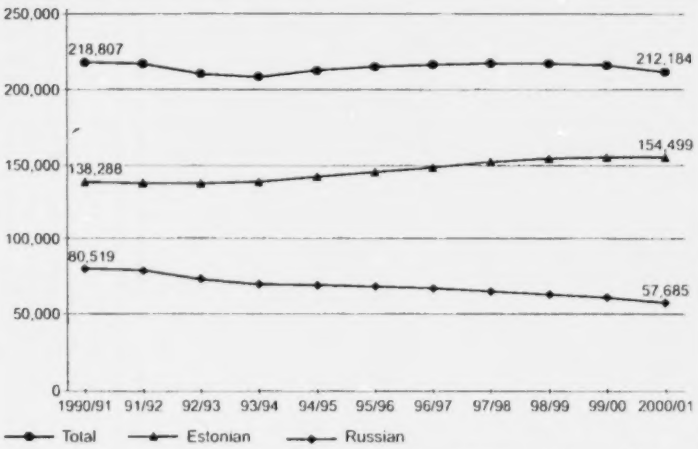
Figure 12.1. The number of pupils in Estonian and Russian schools, 1990/91–2000/01 academic years



Source: The Department of Information and Statistics of the Ministry of Education

A question still remains: to what extent do schools in Estonia produce greater cohesion and integration in society? To put it another way: how close are schools in Estonia to the defining ideal of multicultural education – an education that 'helps students understand and affirm their community cultures and helps free them from cultural boundaries, allowing them to create and maintain a civic community that works for the common good ... and to create a society that recognises and respects the cultures of diverse people, people united within a framework of overarching democratic values' (Banks, 1992: 282)?

This and the following chapters aim to explore actual opportunities of Estonian and Russian schools for contributing to integration and multiculturalism in Estonian society. To what extent are the state's programs of integration implemented in curricula, timetables and instructional materials? How do main educational actors – teachers, pupils and parents – reflect on and feel about possible scenarios of development? Can we regard schools in Estonia as a multicultural field of socialisation? What kind of political and cultural identities are Estonian and Russian pupils likely to construct in these schools?

In this chapter we give a theoretical overview of education as an institution and a field of socialisation, and analyse the relations between multicultural education, integration, and civic society. Some of the socialisers in the educational field – the formal curriculum, educational media and the hidden curriculum – are highlighted and illustrated with available empirical data regarding Estonian educational phenomena. The following chapters explore more concrete cases: problems

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and perspectives of Russian schools, ethno-political discourse in school textbooks, and Russian children in Estonian schools.

1. Education as an institution

Education is one of the most important institutions in the process of inter-ethnic integration. As a process and structure, education produces an effect on society and on the individual, and contributes to their achievement and development. The rise of the educational level and the modernisation of educational content increase the potential of the individual as an active agent and accelerate the processes of innovation. Thus, education itself becomes an engine for further modernisation.

Technological, organisational and socio-economic changes inevitably influence the content and forms of education. These changes may be either direct or mediated by the development of other institutions such as family, state, and economy, and/or the formation of new institutions, such as economic markets and private property, which concretise the necessity and create opportunities for reforming the educational content and diversification of various forms of education.

Innovative changes have added meaning to education and forced the renewal of this relatively inert field. The structural transformation of society and the strengthening of subjective educational aspirations promote an ongoing discussion about educational reforms. Pluralist interests and intensifying trends of multiculturalism in modern societies – attendant phenomena of globalisation – set up challenges for the school as a field of socialisation to prepare individuals with different cultural backgrounds, social capital and experiences for a new social environment. A 'risk society' as the outcome of earlier developments (Beck, 1994), having been formed through constantly autonomising processes of modernisation, influences individual educational strategies (i.e., good education guarantees the individual further self-realisation).

Against the background of general changes in education and increased aspirations for (higher) education, the increasing demand for education in post-Socialist countries is due to the re-institutionalisation of these societies: new or re-established structures (e.g., the free market) increase the role of education as a guarantee of successful coping strategies. New opportunities lead to different choices, which in the new circumstances have become obligatory (Giddens, 1994), and open doors to non-standard careers.

In Estonia, education has traditionally been valued. The free market economy has turned education into a crucial mechanism of socialisation that produces new symbolic capital. Education as an institution changes social status: it creates the starting position for entering the labour market and for continuing acquisition of social competencies. The Russian school's long separation from the Estonian school and its failure to fulfil its socialising function in new circumstances have been crucial problems for the educational policy in re-independent Estonia.

The young generation of Russians differs from Estonians in terms of earlier choices (after primary schooling) of jobs and professions. On the one hand, being

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descendants of industrial workers, they have more often chosen vocational education over comprehensive schools (Pavelson, 1997). On the other hand, the orientation of Russian youth to higher education has grown continuously, following the same trend evident among Estonians, although there is a time lag of five to six years. Russians prefer higher vocational schooling to the academic education that Estonians usually pursue. Thus, the enlargement of educational opportunities for Russians is tied to the development of vocational colleges.

Education can transform the present occupational structure of Russians and lower their unemployment rate, which in the past has been determined by inadequate socialisation and low post-educational aptitude (including insufficient command of Estonian). Thus, education as an institution produces an effect on the behaviour of the labour market and influences the employment and occupational status of Russians – one of the most important preconditions of socio-economic integration.

2. School as a field of socialisation

The concept of 'field of socialisation' springs from the view of socialisation as an ongoing dialectical process, a continuous interplay and interaction between two sets of actors – the individuals being socialised and the agents of socialisation (Bar-Tal & Saxe, 1990; Berger & Luckmann, 1991 [1966]; Gallatin, 1980; Giddens, 1989; Rosengren, 1994). The agents of socialisation contain several socialisers, that is, persons, groups, organisations, categories, objects, events, etc., which contribute to the individual's socialisation (Dekker, 1991a). School socialisers, for instance, are the formal and hidden curricula, textbooks, teachers, classroom rituals, extracurricular activities, etc.

We may think of the agents of socialisation as sites for discourses which penetrate and influence each other, and constitute interaction and social practice in society (see van Dijk, 1997). 'Discourse', though central in the theories of cultural reproduction and social constructivism, which many socialisation theories rely upon, is still too narrow a concept in its emphasis on 'progression of communications' (Biocca, 1991: 45) and language use. Therefore, following Pierre Bourdieu (1991, 1998a), we prefer to view the agents of socialisation as fields – structured social spaces with dominant and dominated social agents and unequal power relations that lead to constant struggle. These fields are discursively interrelated. The field of education is discursively related to the fields of politics, media, family, and peer groups (and those fields are related to each other) when, for instance, a debate over the policy of inter-ethnic integration is shown on TV, and its readings by the pupils' parents and siblings are discussed in a (multicultural) classroom.

Therefore it is very difficult to estimate the particular influence of school in a process of (political) socialisation. After inventorying the results of a number of empirical investigations in the United States, L. H. Ehman (1980) has formulated the following broad generalisations: compared to other factors such as family and media, the school is an important agent for transmitting political information

to young people. The school is somewhat less central in shaping political attitudes and participation orientations, except for students from ethnic minorities and low status groups.

Conclusions regarding the role of schools in the maintenance or alteration of inter-ethnic prejudices and stereotypes are more clear-cut. Cultural and moral education programs designed to reduce racial and ethnic prejudice have often proved to be successful (see Alexander (cited in Farnen, 1993: 433); Armitage (cited in Dekker, 1991b: 343); Dekker et al., 1993). From the maintenance side, Richard Dawson and Kenneth Prewitt (1969) argue that a segregated school system enforces tendencies of rigid and inaccurate stereotyping (pp. 167–170). On the other hand, Ahmed Ijaz and Helene Ijaz (1981) state that the impact of inter-ethnic contact *per se* on the development of positive attitudes toward members of other groups or cultures has not been determined. They developed a cultural program for Canadian elementary school children, which combined an activity and experience approach with an emphasis on cultural similarities and the sources of cultural diversity. The program implemented by an artist-teacher from India resulted in significantly improved attitudes toward East Indians among all pupils who had participated in the program, and a follow-up study showed that the effects of the program were maintained three months after its conclusion.

A general conclusion about the influence of schools in the process of political socialisation can be formulated as follows: schools are rather ineffective in counteracting prevailing attitudes in society as a whole. Attempts to promote positive changes through multicultural education or carefully designed experimental programs have often been successful.

3. Multicultural education as an agency for integration

Concepts and ideas associated with multicultural education are relatively vague and allow for quite divergent interpretation. Some authors (e.g., Krull, 1999) emphasise the difference between a European conception of 'intercultural education' with its moderate views of achieving mutual tolerance between the majority population and immigrants, and the American idea of 'multicultural education', which aims for affirmation of cultural pluralism. It is also possible to see a growing tendency to use the terms 'multicultural education' and 'intercultural education' as synonyms (Pavelson & Trasberg, 1998: 25).

In the stressful post-colonial situation of Estonia, it is reasonable to postulate that the main function of multicultural education is to form a common loyalty in the interests of social cohesion (ibid.: 31). This conception is very close to the defining ideal of multicultural education (Banks, 1992) cited in the introduction, and centres on the idea of a civic nation and democratic values. However, our conception of multicultural education avoids emphasising some ideas stressed by radical multiculturalism (Miller, 1995), which challenge the very principles of nationality. By respect for the cultures of diverse people, we mean the ability to engage in respectful discourse with the cultures and identities of others, instead of the promotion of cultural differences that may lead to separateness or

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loyalty to other states. By teaching mutual recognition and respect, we mean cultural inclusiveness in the curriculum as well as training students to deliberate on politically relevant disagreements, an ability at the very centre of a democratic civic society (cf. Gutmann, 1996: 160). Such a curriculum taught to all pupils would put multicultural education in the service of democratic values, rather than vice versa (ibid.: 159).

Thus, the central goal of multicultural education is to form social competencies. In the course of socialisation going on in Estonian and Russian schools, pupils should acquire skills for successful participation in civic society. Social competence is inseparably bound to communicative competence, i.e., good command of the official language. Guaranteeing the latter to its graduates is one of the biggest problems faced by Russian schools (see Chapter 13). A crucial role in the process of integration is played by desegregated symbolic environments in the field of education, i.e., mutual introduction of cultures through the medium of socialisers in an educational field.

4. Socialisers within the Estonian educational field

4.1. The formal curriculum

A curriculum is closely related to an existential structure which leads to the formation of identity (Pinar, 1992). In a multiethnic society, the 'school curriculum may acknowledge the presence of other identities by introducing elements of minority cultures, but often these remain insignificant in the socialisation of the majority and are tolerated exoticisms within an essentially unitary culture' (Byram & Zarate, 1995: 12). According to Estonian laws, the curriculum of comprehensive schools is mainly authored by two majority-governed institutions – the state and the educational system. Nevertheless, curriculum planners consciously adopted an interactive strategy, which means that the aims and principles of the curriculum were neither reactively taken from a golden era of the past (the first independence period of Estonia), nor proactively sought in the recommendations of (foreign) experts. Instead, curricular aims and contents crystallised in discussions between politicians, scientists, educational experts, teachers, etc. with different views and backgrounds. As a result, educational aims and contents are not entirely fixed in the National Curriculum of Elementary and Secondary Education (1996), but remain open. This should foster the formation of identity in pupils themselves. For instance, one of the principles of the National Curriculum states explicitly that it will be oriented towards problems (p. 1962). Pupils have to be able to choose and decide independently. Teaching methods that require setting up and solving a problem are to be used. Educational materials should offer different viewpoints and hypotheses, several interpretations, even contradictions (ibid.).

The multiethnic reality of Estonia has been taken into consideration in the Curriculum in its emphasis on both patriotism and inter-ethnic/international relations. The Curriculum values the Estonian state, Estonian national consciousness,

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culture, and traditions. However, it also values the identity aspirations and culture of other peoples living in Estonia, the openness of Estonia to Europe and the world, the culture and individual character of all peoples, and the right to be oneself (p. 1961). The general aims of the Curriculum include respect for the culture of one's own and of other peoples, and love for homeland (p. 1960). Nevertheless, the great majority of Russian schoolteachers and half of Estonian teachers-to-be find that the structure and general orientation of the Curriculum are still monocultural (see Chapter 13).

In multiethnic societies, common national identity is usually promoted throughout the curriculum, but it is particularly linked to national/official language(s). 'Socialisation is a process of interaction with existing members of a social group, and crucially consists of learning the language [and culture] of the group through this interaction' (Byram & Zarate, 1995: 12). Bilingual education was experimentally introduced into Russian schools in Estonia in 1992. At the same time, so-called 'Estonian studies' or Estica (regional studies, Estonian literature and culture, geography, history, biology, and practical skills taught in Estonian) were included in the curriculum of some experimental schools to foster 'soft integration' of Russian pupils into Estonian society (see Chapter 13). The first results indicate that those Russian pupils who study Estica have a richer and more extensive command of Estonian vocabulary than do the pupils who study Estonian simply as their second language (Kaskman & Küppar, 1998).

4.2. Educational media

'A curriculum is an abstraction, an amalgamation of goals and aspirations' (Venezky, 1992: 437). From a single set of curriculum guidelines, an infinite number of textbooks and other educational media could be built, each with its own interpretation of the curriculum and its own potential contribution to the process of socialisation. It is very difficult to separate the role of teaching media in general, and the actual contribution of a single textbook in particular, from other factors involved in the process of socialisation. The interrelationship of normative influences in textbooks with other influences in school, especially with that of the teacher, and with the other fields of socialisation is very complicated. Socialisers function concurrently, are linked to one another, influence one another, and function within different social structures, cultures, and processes (Dekker, 1991a: 31). Moreover, each pupil interacts directly with the text, and constructs his or her own meaning in the social process of reading. To put it another way, textbooks are 'multiply encoded and can be multiply decoded' (Stray, 1994: 6). Since we have to deal with texts possessing an institutionally defined authority – textbooks (Olson, 1989; Selander, 1995) – the potential for different meanings is still 'much less than infinite' (Buckingham, 1993: 270). When the meanings refer to commonsense values or socially sensitive issues, they 'are often structured in ways which exert pressure on the process of decoding, channelling understanding one way rather than another and setting the stage for "legitimate" interpretation' (Deacon et al., 1999: 141).

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In spite of the complexity and methodological problems involved, numerous studies have attempted to measure the influence of textbooks and other reading materials (see Brams, 1980, 487–488; Pratt, 1972: 4, for an overview). Research has shown that attitudes toward minorities, in particular, can be affected by certain types of instructional materials (ibid.). John Lichter and David Johnson (1969), for instance, demonstrated in a pre-test/post-test study controlling for the teacher, the classroom, the school, and the reading ability of subjects, that the use of a multiethnic reader, which included characters from several different racial and ethnic groups, resulted in marked positive change in pupils' attitudes toward non-whites. It appears relatively safe to conclude that the dynamics resulting from the authoritative quality of textbooks, reinforced by the legitimised authority of the teacher working in the same direction, would minimise resistance to the potential influence of a textbook, and would lead to internalisation of the provided images of ethnic groups (Heraclides, 1980: 35).

Do teachers actually work in the same direction as textbook content, or do they reject or supplement textbook material? A. B. Hodgetts' (1968) study of the teaching in 847 Canadian classrooms clearly demonstrated that teachers of history and civics allow the content of the textbook to determine to a great extent the content of instruction. Very little is known about Estonian teachers in this respect. According to the results of a pilot questionnaire study carried out at the end of 1999[1], civic education textbooks are important to 74% of the respondents, both Estonian- and Russian-speaking teachers, although other materials are also used in planning a lesson. While the teachers were rather dissatisfied with the civic education textbooks they were using, none of them explicitly mentioned any shortcomings in the treatment of minorities, even though problems of that kind are rather substantial in some Estonian textbooks (see Chapter 14). We can hypothesise that, in more or less mono-ethnic Estonian schools, teachers most probably do not reject the dominant view on society represented in Estonian textbooks, and therefore do not create any buffer between the text and pupils in this respect. As a result, the textbooks do not contribute to the understanding that people from different ethnic groups living in Estonia should be recognised and respected as full and equal members of society. A pilot study carried out in spring 2000 with ninth-form pupils of an Estonian school[2] after they had finished reading their civic education textbooks indicated that the inter-ethnic attitudes of those pupils were rather similar to the recent attitudes of the Estonian adult population (see Chapter 6). For instance, 31% of the pupils shared the opinion that Russians should leave Estonia (compared to 46% of adult Estonians who agreed with the statement that emigration of Russians would benefit Estonia). This harmonises with another finding: among ten geographically and culturally close nations, those whose representatives live in Estonia were least liked by Estonian pupils (the mean scores for Russians, Byelorussians and Jews on a 10-point scale being 4.07, 4.40 and 4.46, respectively), while Estonians themselves were the 'most-loved' ethnic group (the mean being 8.31), followed by 'harmless' Norwegians and Swedes (6.89 and 6.59, respectively) among surrounding nations. The Russophobia of Estonians, mentioned and excused in the ninth-form civics textbook (see Chapter 14), may, to some extent, have become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Teachers in the multiethnic classrooms of Estonian schools may develop more delicate strategies of mediating Estonian civics and history textbooks. Nevertheless, textbooks may create problems for a Russian child who enters an Estonian school: exclusion or concessive treatment of minorities found in some civic education textbooks and ABC-books may produce the shifted socialisation experienced by some Russian children in Estonian schools (see Chapter 15). Russian-speaking teachers, on the other hand, may lay even more emphasis on the construction of multiple identities than suggested in Russian versions of the textbooks. Russian respondents to the pilot study of teachers (referred to above) often requested visual teaching aids that carry Estonian national identity and implant loyalty to the state (flags, coats of arms, portraits, etc.).

4.3. The hidden curriculum

In the field of education, socialisation takes place formally through instruction in the curriculum and informally through experiences in the classroom and the school as a whole (cf. Ehman, 1980). This informal, often unintentional, socialisation, or the hidden curriculum, can be defined as 'all the other things that are learned during schooling in addition to the official curriculum' (Meighan, 1991: 66). The hidden curriculum is made up of the classroom climate in terms of rigidity or flexibility of the discourse rules, the school culture in terms of possibilities for pupils' self-government, the architecture and interior of the school and the classroom, teacher-pupil interaction, the system of marking and examining, the hidden messages in educational media, the language and symbolic environment of the school, and the climate of peer culture. It is in the latter point where two fields of socialisation – the field of school and the field of the peer society – intersect and interact.

It is rather difficult to study the phenomena of the hidden curriculum, and not much is known about schools in Estonia in this respect. The case study 'Russian child in the Estonian school' has shed some light on Estonian schools as a learning and language environment and a social context where the relationships and personalities of Russian children are formed. The general conclusion is positive: learning in an Estonian school helps a Russian pupil to integrate into Estonian society or 'softens' his or her socialisation (see Chapter 15). The rich symbolic environment of the Russian schools we have visited (self-made figures of the national flag, bird, and flower of Estonia, as well as Russian cultural symbols on the walls of corridors and classrooms) bears witness to conscious efforts of the school staff to form multiple identities in Russian-speaking children and to implant loyalty to the Estonian state. A few studies have focused on the hidden curriculum of Estonian and Russian school textbooks (see Chapter 14).

It is important to keep in mind that there is also a constant dialectic between the hidden curriculum and the pupils/school staff: while exercising influence on the actors in school, the hidden curriculum is being formed and reformed by these actors, including the youngest pupils. Personality characteristics play an important role in determining how, and to what extent, the values and ideas of the hidden curriculum are internalised, and what identity is constructed in the

process. The case study 'Russian children in Estonian schools' revealed that stigmatising and re-identifying socialisation paths occur due to both the personality and the social context (see Chapter 15).

Conclusions

A number of studies monitoring the process of socialisation in Estonian and Russian schools are still pending. On the basis of transitory recordings, two broad generalisations can be made.

1. Though many problems still exist, Russians schools in Estonia have been quite successful in their progress towards becoming educational institutions that foster multiple identities and future citizens' loyalty to the state.

2. Estonian schools serve as multicultural educational institutions in so far as they accommodate intercultural socialisation of Russian-speaking children.

Multinational integration, as Amy Gutmann (1996) has put it, 'depends on the presence of enough people who are willing to support an educational system that does not teach antagonism among diverse national (ethnic, religious or racial) groups' (p. 172). The Estonian society that can still be characterised as 'beset by entrenched historical animosities' (ibid.) expects its educational actors to go by socially shared assumptions rather than official state policy. At present, toleration for different ethnic groups, the first step according to Sonia Nieto's (1992) conception of multicultural education, seems most likely to be achieved in Estonian schools (cf. Krull, 1999). The next levels of internalisation of multicultural educational orientations (acceptance, respect, and affirmation) can probably be realised when the majority of Estonians have reasonably overcome their existential fear about their cultural survival, and higher levels of mutual trust between Estonians and Russians have been reached.

Notes

1 The pilot questionnaire survey with 42 respondents (14 Estonian and 28 Russian teachers of civic education from Tallinn and Ida-Virumaa) was carried out in November 1999 by V. Kalmus.

2 The pilot questionnaire survey with 55 respondents (the ninth-form pupils of an Estonian school in Tartu) was carried out in May 2000 by V. Kalmus.

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